

# Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : General Counsel

DATE: 3 April 1950

FROM : Chief, Services Division

SUBJECT: Issuance of Transportation Requests to Travel Agencies

1. The Standardized Government Travel Regulations As Amended 30 January 1942, provide in Section III, Paragraph 20, as follows:

"20. Used for all official travel.--Transportation requests should be used, when practicable, to obtain all official transportation where the amount involved is \$1 or more, but should not be issued to companies other than transportation lines commonly recognized as such. Transportation requests must not be used for personal travel."

General Regulations No. 108 issued by the General Accounting Office under date of 21 November 1946, under the heading "USE OF U.S. GOVERNMENT REQUESTS FOR TRANSPORTATION", provides in part "United States Government requests for transportation will be furnished...to transportation companies in the United States...."

2. It has been and continues to be a matter of standard practice on the part of most Government agencies and departments to issue Transportation Requests to Thos. Cook & Son, Inc., the American Express Company, and other similar travel agencies, which, as a matter of business, procure reservations and actually purchase transportation reservations for individuals, both public and private, from the transportation carriers. This is done in order that travel is continuous and uninterrupted, and that connected arrangements by air, steamship, and surface transportation can be made, thereby resulting in great convenience to the traveller. There is also a considerable saving in connection with per diem paid to Government employee travellers by the use of these facilities in that they are not required to lay over at various points throughout the world where they are changing from one transportation carrier to another. Another advantage is that the inexperienced traveller will avoid many personal problems which he would ordinarily encounter in connection with foreign travel. Also, he may not always use the cheapest mode of travel or routing, thereby resulting in serious fiscal difficulties in obtaining reimbursement or approval of his travel voucher.

3. By a strict interpretation of the above quoted regulations, it appears that Transportation Requests cannot be issued to other than transportation companies, thereby eliminating travel agencies, such as

Thos. Cook & Son, Inc. This question was recently raised by the United States Lines in connection with travellers desiring to go to Austria, in which case an attempt was made by the Transportation Branch, Services Division, to make travel arrangements through Thos. Cook & Son, Inc. This was discovered by the United States Lines, who demanded that Transportation Requests be issued directly to the carrier, i.e., in accordance with the Standardized Government Travel Regulations, apparently for the purpose of avoiding the payment of commission to the travel agency, Thos. Cook & Son, Inc.

4. Transportation carriers do not offer the services offered by Thos. Cook & Son, Inc., or other travel agencies, and the actual cost to the Government in issuing Transportation Requests to such agencies is exactly the same as it would be in the case of issuing the requests to the initial carrier itself. It seems that the elimination of difficulties to the traveller and to the Government as a whole justifies the issuance of Transportation Requests to travel agencies as is now being done.

5. There is some feeling that the regulations were issued for the purpose of eliminating the use of Transportation Requests in connection with taxi service and other transportation facilities not having proper arrangements for correctly billing the Government for transportation services. This is not the case of Thos. Cook & Son, Inc., or other similar travel agencies, as a great majority of the business conducted by these companies is for Government agencies and Government employee travellers.

6. The services of Thos. Cook & Son, Inc., are, of course, only utilized where it is advantageous to both the Government and the traveller and are not used in the discrimination of any transportation carrier.

7. An opinion is therefore requested as to the application of these regulations and whether or not Transportation Requests can continue to be issued to travel agencies. If you find that the intention of these regulations is not entirely clear, it is recommended that a decision of the Comptroller General be requested in order that this point may be fully clarified.

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